



Urban Mental Health: Improving mental health in the city of Bochum

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Abstract: **Background**

Bochum is located in the heart of the Ruhr area, the largest metropolitan area in Germany. Compared to rural areas, urban living conditions pose a significant challenge to mental health. Insufficient space for exercise, excessive noise, poor air quality, high poverty rates, migration and social disadvantage affects not only physical health, but also mental health. Especially for children and young people growing up in cities. Previous approaches to promoting healthy cities have mostly focused on structural improvements, such as better access to educational institutions and the expansion of public health services, thus primarily benefiting the educated population. However, psychosocial and psychotherapeutic prevention and treatment services, which have been shown to promote mental health in the long term, are too rarely applied in the measures. The planned project 'Urban Mental Health' places childhood at the center of psychosocial interventions, since this phase of life decisively determines the course of mental health. The interventions are to be adapted to the living environments of the children and their families (kindergarten, school, work). Particular attention is paid to families from disadvantaged population groups.

Methodology

Using a socio-spatial and population-based strategy, a consistent application of evidence-based psychological interventions from primary prevention to complex treatment and rehabilitation for mental health problems and disorders will be implemented. Two urban areas with a high proportion of socially disadvantaged residents (e.g., Bochum-Wattenscheid Mitte) will be compared (e.g., Bochum-Werne). The first goal is to increase the competence around the topic of mental health in children/adolescents. In addition, the transfer of knowledge and competencies is to be adapted to the respective conditions of an institution and to be integrated into the already existing structures. Training and continuous supervision are provided by qualified psychologists at the Research and Treatment Center of the Ruhr University in

Bochum. The human health of employees (self-efficacy, satisfaction, stress), as well as of children and adolescents (mental health) is regularly surveyed and embedded in a learning system in order to continuously improve the interventions.

Expected results

Already in the short term, an improvement in knowledge about mental health and possibilities for action to maintain or improve mental health as well as an improvement in well-being will be visible among all participating actors and the studied target group (children, adolescents, families). In the medium term, it is expected that the frequency of mental disorders will decrease and the well-being of families in the model regions will increase.